

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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REP. MARKEY CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION OF RED TAPE THAT CHOKED DEPLOYMENT OF MA FIREFIGHTERS IN KATRINA RESPONSE

Markey Expresses Concern at Lack of Coordination, Planning in Response to Hurricane Katrina

Washington, DC - Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Committee on Homeland Security, today sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to urge the Department to investigate reports that bureaucratic delays and confusion thwarted the efforts of some first responders from outside areas affected by Hurricane Katrina to deploy to New Orleans and other communities damaged by the storm. In his letter, Rep. Markey noted that the Massachusetts fire service was prepared to travel to the Gulf region to assist residents of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, but was not provided formal authorization from the Commonwealth. Some Massachusetts fire fighters eventually deployed to the affected areas as part of the National Guard Reserve, Federal Urban Search and Rescue and other units, but these deployments were not conducted as part of a comprehensive Federal policy.

“To ensure that critical resources and personnel reach disaster areas as quickly as possible, we must ensure that the necessary policies are in place before disasters strike. It is clear that the Federal government failed to prepare for, and respond to, Hurricane Katrina. I am concerned that the lack of coordination and prior planning for the activation of police officers, fire fighters and other emergency responders from outside the Gulf region contributed to the devastation in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina,” Rep. Markey said. “The failures of the Katrina response go beyond a lack of preparation. There is not simply a case of a shortage of resources, the Katrina rescue operation squandered resources that *were* in place because they were mismanaged. How many other states around the country had first responders and equipment ready to go to use that were tied up in government red tape?”

The letter that Rep. Markey sent today requests that the Department probe:

- Whether there was an absence of necessary nationwide mutual aid compacts that prevented deployment of the Massachusetts fire service; and
- Whether FEMA requested from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) information about the availability of the fire service for deployment to the Gulf Region

“Hurricane Katrina washed away the illusion that the Federal government is prepared to respond to a major natural disaster, an outbreak of a flu pandemic or a terrorist attack. We must learn the lessons of Katrina, and I urge Secretary Chertoff to get to the bottom of the problems that delayed, and in some

cases prevented, first responders from coming to the aid of residents of New Orleans and other affected communities,” Rep. Markey concluded.

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